CHARLOTTE BRONTË.

CHARLOTTE AND EMILY BRONTË.

BY MRS. HENRY FAWCETT.

In the quiet Yorkshire village of Haworth, on the bleak moorland hillside above Keighley, were born two of the greatest imaginative writers of the present century, Charlotte and Emily Brontë. The wonderful gifts of the Brontë family, the grief and tragedy that overshadowed their lives, and their early deaths will always cast about their story a peculiarly touching interest. Their father, the Rev. Patrick Brontë, was of Irish birth. He was born in the County Down, of a Protestant family—one that had migrated from the south to the north of Ireland. His character was that which we are more accustomed to associate with Scotland than with Ireland. Resolute, stern, independent and self-denying, he had the virtues of an old Covenanter rather than the facile graces which so often distinguish those of Celtic blood. His father was a farmer, but Patrick Brontë had no desire to live by agricultural industry. At sixteen years of age he separated himself from his family and opened a school. What amount of success he had in this undertaking does not appear, but it is evident that he had a distinct object in view, namely, to obtain money enough to complete his own education; in this he was successful, for after nine years' labour in instructing others, he entered as a student in St. John's College, Cambridge, remained there four years, obtained the B.A. degree of the University, and was ordained as a clergyman of the Church of England. He kept up no intercourse with his family, and showed no trace of his Irish blood, either in speech or character. He loved and married Miss Branwell, of Penzance, a lady of much sweetness, delicate modesty, and refinement. Their six children were destined, through the writings of two of them, to be known wherever the English language is spoken, all over the world. After holding livings in Essex and at Thornton, in Yorkshire, Mr. Brontë was appointed to the Rectory of Haworth, which is now so often visited on account of its association with the authors of "Jane Eyre" and "Wuthering Heights."

Mrs. Brontë's six children were born in rapid succession, and her naturally delicate constitution was further tried by the constant labour and anxiety involved in providing, on very limited means, for the wants of the little brood. Mrs. Gaskell, in her "Life of Charlotte Brontë," appears to imply that, more than is even usually the case, the weight of family cares and anxieties fell upon the mother rather than the

father. "Mr. Brontë," she says, "was, of course, much engaged in his study, and besides, he was not naturally fond of children, and felt their frequent appearance upon the scene as a drag both on his wife's strength, and as an interruption to the comfort of the household." One feels disposed to comment on this by saying that children ought never to be born if either of their parents inclines to regard them "as an interruption to the comfort of the household." To give life and grudge it at the same time is not an attractive combination of qualities. Though not much helped by her husband, Mrs. Brontë was, however, not alone in her domestic cares and duties; the eldest of the "interruptions to the comfort of the household," Maria, was a child of wonderfully precocious intellect and heart. Her remarkable character was described in after years by her sister Charlotte, as the Helen Burns of "Jane Eyre." In her, her mother found a sympathising companion and a helper in her domestic cares. The time was rapidly approaching when the mother's place in the household would be vacant, and when many of its duties and responsibilities would be discharged by Maria.

The little Brontës were from their birth unlike other children. The room dedicated to their use was not, even in their babyhood, called their nursery; it was their "study." Little Maria at seven years old would shut herself up in this study with the newspaper, and be able to converse with her father on all the public events of the day, and instruct the other children as to current politics, and upon the characters of the chief personages of the political world.

Mrs. Brontë died in 1821. Maria was then eight; Elizabeth, seven; Charlotte, five; Patrick Branwell, four; Emily, three; and Anne, one. The little motherless brood were left alone for a year, when an elder sister of their mother came to live at the parsonage, but she does not seem to have had any real influence over them. She taught the girls to stitch and sew, and to become proficient in various domestic arts, but she had no sympathy or communion with them, and their real life was lived quite apart from hers. As soon almost as they could read and write at all, they began to compose plays and act them; they had no society but each other's; this, however, was all-sufficient for them. Their power of invention and imagination was very marked; to the habit of composing stories in their own minds they gave the name of "making out." As soon as the labour of writing became less formidable than it always is to baby fingers, the stories thus "made out" were written down. In fifteen months, when Charlotte was about twelve to thirteen years of age, she wrote twenty-two volumes of manuscript, in the minutest hand, which can hardly be deciphered except with the aid of a magnifying-glass. The Duke of Wellington filled a large place in the minds of the Brontës, and in their romances. Something of what the hero was to them when they were children, Charlotte afterwards put into the mouth of Shirley, the heroine of her novel of that name. After the manner of imaginative children, she not only worshipped her hero from afar, but identified herself with him or with members of his family. The authorship of many of her childish romances and poems is ascribed, in her imagination, to the Marquis of Douro, or Lord Charles Wellesley; and when these "goodly youths" are not introduced as authors they often become the chief personages of the story.

The shadow of death that casts so deep a gloom over the story of the Brontë family, first fell on Maria and Elizabeth, the two elder children. The four girls—Maria, Elizabeth, Charlotte, and Emily—had been sent to a school, which was partly a charitable institution, at Cowan Bridge, in Westmoreland. The living at Haworth parsonage was the reverse of luxurious, but the food and the sanitary arrangements at Cowan Bridge were so bad that the health of the little Brontës was seriously injured by it. The food was repulsive from the want of cleanliness with which it was prepared and placed on the table. The children frequently refused food altogether, though sinking from the want of it, rather than drink the "bingy" milk, and eat unappetising scraps from a dirty larder, and puddings made with water taken from rain-tubs and impregnated with the smell of soot and dust. Besides the faulty domestic arrangements of the school, the discipline was harsh and tyrannical, and one teacher in particular was guilty of conduct towards Maria Brontë that can only be called brutal. Low fever broke out at the school, from which about forty of the pupils suffered, but the Brontës did not take the disease. It was evident that Maria was destined for another fate, that of consumption. She was removed from the school only a few days before her death, and Elizabeth followed her to the grave about six weeks later, in June, 1825. Even after this Mr. Brontë's eyes were not opened to the danger his children were in by their treatment at Cowan Bridge, and Charlotte and Emily were still allowed to remain at the school. It soon, however, became evident that they would not be long in following Maria and Elizabeth unless they were removed; and they returned home before the rigours of another winter set in. All the physical and mental tortures she endured at Cowan Bridge, Charlotte afterwards described in the account she gives of "Lowood" in "Jane Eyre." It is not to be taken that the account of "Lowood" is as strictly an accurate description of Cowan Bridge as Charlotte Brontë would have given if she had been simply writing a history of the school. The facts are, perhaps, magnified by the lurid glow of passion and grief with which she recalled her sisters' sufferings. She was only between nine and ten when she left Cowan Bridge, and in the account she wrote of it twenty years later we see rather the impression that was left on her imagination than a strictly accurate history; but there is no doubt that in her account of Maria Brontë's angelic patience, and the cruel persecution to which she was subjected by one of the teachers, the Lowood of "Jane Eyre" is a perfectly faithful transcript of what took place at Cowan Bridge. Mrs. Gaskell says, "Not a word of that part of 'Jane Eyre' but is a literal repetition of scenes between the pupil and the teacher. Those who had been pupils at the same time knew who must have written the book from the force with which Helen Burns' sufferings are described."

After the death of Maria and Elizabeth, the next great sorrow of the Brontë family arose from the career of the only son, Patrick Branwell. He was a handsome boy of exceptional mental powers. He had in particular the gift of brilliant conversation, and there was hardly anything he attempted in the way of talking, writing, or drawing which he did not do well. In one of Charlotte's letters she says, "You ask me if I do not think that men are strange beings? I do, indeed. I have often thought so; and I think, too, that the mode of bringing them up is strange; they are not sufficiently guarded from temptation. Girls are protected as if they were something very frail and silly indeed, while boys are turned loose on the world, as if they of all beings in existence were the wisest and least liable to be led astray." Poor Branwell, with his brilliant social qualities, was not sufficiently guarded from temptation. The easiest outlet from the narrow walls of Haworth parsonage was to be found at the little inn of Haworth village. The habit of the place was, when any stranger arrived at the inn, for the

host to send for the brilliant boy from the parsonage to amuse the guest. The result will easily be guessed. The guiding principle of Charlotte's character was her inexorable fidelity to duty; her whole nature turned with irresistible force to what was right rather than to what was pleasant. With Branwell the reverse was the case. Conventional morality of course strictly guarded Charlotte from the possible dangers of associating with casual strangers at the village inn, although her strong, resolute character would not have run a tenth part of the risk of contamination as did that of the weak, pleasure-seeking Branwell. It is needless to dwell on the details of his gradual degradation; the high ideals and hopes of his youth were given up; his character became at once coarse and weak. He was entirely incapable of self-government and of retaining any kind of respectable employment. His intemperance and other vices made the daily life of his sisters at the parsonage a nightmare of horrors. For eight years the young man, whose boyhood his family had watched with so much hope and pride, was a source of shame and anguish to them, all the more keenly felt because it could not be openly avowed. Many who knew the family affirmed that so far as purely intellectual qualities were concerned Branwell was even more eminently distinguished than his sisters; but mere intellect, without moral power to guide it, is as dangerous as a spirited horse without bit or bridle. Branwell was singularly deficient in that moral power in which his sisters were so strong, and his education did nothing to supply this natural deficiency. He died in 1848, at the age of thirty.

Cowan Bridge was not the only experience Charlotte and Emily had of school life. They went for a time to another school at Roe Head, where Charlotte was very happy, and in 1835 she returned to the same school as a teacher. In 1842, Charlotte and Emily went to a school in Brussels, where the former stayed two years, the latter only one. All that Charlotte saw and all the friends she made were afterwards pourtrayed in her stories. One of her most intimate friends became the Caroline Helstone of "Shirley"; the originals of Rose and Jessie Yorke were also among her schoolfellows at Roe Head. There can be little doubt that M. Paul Emanuel of Villette was M. Héger of the Brussels school. Every trivial circumstance of an unusually uneventful life became food for her imagination.

The development of Emily's genius was different. Her love of the moors around Haworth was so intense that it was impossible for her to thrive when she was away from them. It became a fact recognised by all the family that Emily must not be taken away from home. The solitude of the wild, dark moors, and the communing with her own heart, together with the dark tragedy of Branwell's wasted life, were the sole sources of Emily's inspiration. Her poems have a wild, untameable quality in them, and her one romance, "Wuthering Heights," places her in the first rank among the great imaginative writers of English fiction. There is something terrible in Emily's sternness of character which she never vented pitilessly on any one but herself. She was deeply reserved, and hardly ever, even to her sisters, spoke of what she felt most intensely. A friend who furnished Mrs. Gaskell with some particulars for her biography, states that on one occasion she mentioned "that some one had asked me what religion I was of (with the view of getting me for a partisan), and that I had said that was between God and me. Emily, who was lying on the hearth-rug, exclaimed, 'That's right.' This was all," adds the friend, "I ever heard Emily say on religious subjects." Emily's love for animals was intense; she was especially devoted to a savage old bull-dog named Keeper, who owned no master but herself. The incident in "Shirley" of the heroine being bitten by a mad dog, and straightway burning the wound herself with a red-hot Italian iron, was true of Emily Her last illness was a time of terrible agony to Charlotte and Anne, not merely because they saw that she who, Charlotte said, was the thing that seemed nearest to her heart in the world was going to be taken from them, but because Emily's resistance to the inroads of illness was so terrible. She resolutely refused to see a doctor, and she would allow no nursing and no tender helpfulness of any kind. It was evident to her agonised sisters that she was dying, but she maintained her savage reserve, suffering in solitary silence rather than admit her pain and weakness. On the very day of her death she rose as usual, dressed herself, and attempted to carry on her usual employments, and all this with the catching, rattling breath and the glazing eye which told that the hand of Death was actually upon her. Charlotte wrote in this agonising hour, "Moments so dark as these I have never known. I pray for God's support to us all. Hitherto He has granted it." At noon on that day, when it was too late, Emily whispered in gasps, "If you will send for a doctor, I will see him now." A few days later Charlotte wrote, "We are very calm at present. Why should we be otherwise? The anguish of seeing her suffer is over; the spectacle of the pains of death is gone by; the funeral day is past. We feel she is at peace. No need to tremble for the hard frost and the keen wind. Emily does not feel them." The terrible anguish of those last days haunted the surviving sisters like a vision of doom. Nearly six months later Charlotte wrote again that nothing but hope in the life to come had kept her heart from breaking. "I cannot forget," she says, "Emily's death-day; it becomes a more fixed, a darker, a more frequently recurring idea in my mind than ever. It was very terrible. She was torn, conscious, panting, reluctant, though resolute, out of a happy life." Within a very short time the gentle youngest sister Anne also died, and Charlotte was left with her father, the last survivor of the family of six wonderful children who had come to Haworth twenty-nine years before.

In earlier and happier days the habit of the sisters had been, when their aunt went to bed at nine o'clock, to put out the candles and pace up and down the room discussing the plots of their novels, and making plans and projects for their future life. Now Charlotte was left to pace the room alone, with all that had been dearest to her in the world under the church pavement at Haworth and in the old churchyard at Scarborough. But Charlotte was not one to give way to self-indulgent idleness, even in the hour of darkest despair. She was writing "Shirley" at the time of Anne's last illness. After the death of this beloved and only remaining sister, she resumed her task; but those who knew what her private history at the time was, can trace in the pages of the novel what she had gone through. The first chapter she wrote after the death of Anne is called, "The Valley of the Shadow of Death."

The first venture in authorship of the sisters was a volume of poems, to which they each contributed. They imagined, probably with justice, that the world was at that time prejudiced against literary women. Therefore they were careful to conceal, even from their publishers, their real identity. The poems were published as the writings of Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell.

"Jane Eyre" was the first of Charlotte's stories which was published, but "The Professor" was the first that was written with a view to publication. The sisters each wrote

HAWORTH PARSONAGE.

a story—Charlotte, "The Professor"; Emily, "Wuthering Heights"; and Anne, "Agnes Grey," and sent them to various publishers. Charlotte was the only one of the three sisters whose manuscript was returned on her hands. But she was not discouraged by the disappointment. Just at this time Mr. Brontë, who had been suffering from cataract, was persuaded by his daughters to go to Manchester for an operation. Charlotte accompanied him, and it was while she was waiting on him, in the long suspense after the operation had been performed, that she began "Jane Eyre," the book that made her, and ultimately the name of Brontë, famous. Nothing is more striking in Charlotte's personal history than the way in which she reproduced the events and personages of her own circle into her novels. Probably the belief that she was writing anonymously encouraged her in this. Her father's threatened blindness and her own fear of a similar calamity are reflected, as it were, in the blindness of Rochester in "Jane Eyre." The success of "Jane Eyre" was rapid and complete, and there was much dispute whether its author were a man or a woman. The *Quarterly Review* distinguished itself by the remark that if the author were a woman it was evident "she must be one who for some sufficient reason has long forfeited the society of her sex." Sensitive as Charlotte Brontë was, the coarseness of the insult could not wound her; it could at the utmost be regarded as nothing worse than a trivial annoyance; for when the words reached Charlotte, the grave had not long closed over Branwell's wasted life; Emily was just dead, and it was evident that Anne was dying. The greatness of her grief and the anguish of her loneliness, dwarfed to their proper proportions the petty insults that at another time would have caused her acute pain. On the whole she had nothing to complain of in the way her book was received; she suffered no lack of generous appreciation from the real leaders of the literary world. Thackeray and G. H. Lewes, Miss Martineau and Sidney Dobell were warm in their praise of her work. Charlotte's manner of making her literary fame known to her father was characteristic. The secret of their authorship had been very strictly kept by the sisters, but when the success of "Jane Eyre" was assured, Emily and Anne urged Charlotte that their father ought to be allowed to share the pleasure of knowing that she was the writer of the book. Accordingly one afternoon Charlotte entered her father's study and said, "Papa, I've been writing a book." When Mr. Brontë found that the book was not only written, but printed and published, he exclaimed, "My dear, you've never thought of the expense it will be! It will be almost sure to be a loss, for how can you get a book sold? No one knows you or your name."

"But, papa, I don't think it will be a loss; no more will you, if you will just let me read you a review or two, and tell you more about it." At tea that evening Mr. Brontë exclaimed to his other daughters, "Girls, do you know that Charlotte has been writing a book, and it is much better than likely?"

The pacing up and down of the sisters in the firelight, discussing the plots of their novels, has been already mentioned. Mrs. Gaskell records that Charlotte told her that these discussions seldom had any effect in causing her to change the events in her stories, "so possessed was she with the feeling that she had described reality." This confirms what Mr. Swinburne has said of her strongest characteristic as an author, that she has the power of making the reader feel in every nerve that thus and not otherwise it must have been. It must not, however, be thought that the conversations with her sisters were therefore useless; no doubt they were very stimulating to her imagination, and gave her creations more solid reality than they would otherwise have had.

In 1854, Charlotte Brontë married Mr. Nicholls, an Irish gentleman, who had for eight years been her father's curate. She only lived nine months after her marriage. She was happy in her husband's love, and appreciated his devotion to his parish duties. But the loving admirers of Charlotte Brontë can never feel much enthusiasm for Mr. Nicholls. Mrs. Gaskell states that he was not attracted by her literary fame, but was rather repelled by it; he appears to have used her up remorselessly, in their short married life, in the routine drudgery of parish work. She did not complain; on the contrary, she seemed more than contented to sacrifice everything for him and his work; but she remarks in one of her letters, "I have less time for thinking"; apparently she had none for writing. Surely the husband of a Charlotte Brontë, just as much as the wife of a Wordsworth

or a Tennyson, ought to be attracted by literary fame. To be the life partner of one to whom the most precious of Nature's gifts is confided, and to be unappreciative of it and even repelled by it, shows a littleness of nature and essential meanness of soul. A true wife or husband of one of these gifted beings should rather regard herself or himself as responsible to the world for making the conditions of the daily life of their distinguished partners favourable to the development of their genius. But pearls have before now been cast before swine, and one cannot but regret that Charlotte Brontë was married to a man who did not value her supreme place in literature as he ought.

OUR NEIGHBOUR, WIDOW YATES.

BY GRACE STEBBING.

CHAPTER XXVI.

CONCLUSION.

It was true that Sarah Stokes had come out to see the vicar, but then, so she had now seen him, even though he had not seen her. And if her object had also been to speak with him, well, then also so he had spoken to her, even if he had done so without knowing it.

Sarah Stokes went on through the leafless wood in a state of dream.

There was no seeking for Charlie's mother needing to be done. There were no steps to be taken to trace her out. She was almost close at hand, and her very home was known. But it was the home of a widow. "Widow Yates," they had said. "Our neighbour, Widow Yates."

The father was gone—the father to whom the stolen child had been as "the apple of his eye," the beloved little king of his home, his joy and delight; he was gone. Restitution could never be made by the thief to him.

That was one train of thought. Then for the other. Not

so terrible, not so bitter, but so perplexing to the benumbed brain. Mary Yates, too, had lost husband and child, both deeply beloved, dearly cherished. She had lost neither of them through fault of her own, and yet she meekly bowed beneath her burden, and lent her shoulder to those others around who found theirs too heavy for them.

Sarah reached her home, and opened the door, to find little Charlie sobbing heavily. She was tired, miserable, hungry, conscience-stricken, and once more tormented with feelings of jealousy. Her voice was rough in consequence as she exclaimed, sharply—

"Well, what's the matter now with you, ye whining little bit o' goods?"

She truly had forgotten for the moment, and her tones were the hard tones of old. The child stared in amaze, and started, and as she went towards him he sprang up from the floor with a piteous look of terror on his face. There was no Uncle Jim now to protect him, if his "aunt" meant to bring back the former terrible days once more.

"Oh! I won't cry no more. Don't beat me. I won't cry no more."

"Bah!" ejaculated Mrs. Stokes, but with a sob now, and a hurt look on her face. "What do ye want to say that for, when ye know, well's well, I haven't beaten ye these months upon months past. But t' don't seem to make much difference to ye; ye're sure to find summat to cry about as if your heart was breakin', same as if I had beaten ye. What were ye a-doin' it for this evening, I ask ye?"

Charlie still trembled, as he answered in a whisper—"I—I'm sorry I cried. Only I did so want some—some dinner, or——" he added, with a glance round the darkening room, "or some tea. Just one—one lickle piece of bread."

Full memory of the child's lonely, starving days came back to Sarah now; she caught him up, kissed him passionately, flung herself into a chair with him still in her arms, and burst into a perfect storm of sobs herself.

"And to think," she exclaimed, "as his own mother is a-givin' away right an' lift to them as is no kin, with her own child here starving! That beats all."

To have heard her, any one would have supposed that Mrs. Stokes held Mary herself responsible for this hard state of things. And really to a degree the supposition would have been correct, for in such a mood as her present one the poor creature was unreasonable enough for anything.

But Charlie Yates was shivering in her lap with the chill of hunger, and with the new affection for him that had grown in her heart she contrived to stem her own outburst with a speed never dreamt of before, and putting him down on the floor again, she set about preparing the meal that her husband had longed to enjoy with his wife.

In that neighbourhood of abundant wood, fire was a luxury not difficult to obtain. It was soon blazing away cheerfully, the kettle was on, the last remaining spoonful of the Christmas gift of tea brought out, and some sugar. Then—what next? Charlie's eyes were fixed in pitiful longing on the cupboard. What next? Nothing. Nothing more came out, because there was nothing to come.

A low sob broke from the poor little boy. He could not help it, with all his sweet spirit of patience. He was suffering so much with semi-starvation.

His companion echoed his sob. She was faint with hunger too, but to do her justice the moan of sorrow now was on the child's behalf wholly, not her own.

"Don't go to cry agen," she said, huskily. "Be a good boy, and I'll get ye something t' eat in a minute."

She left the room hastily, but once outside she stood more than a minute quite still before she took another step. Never yet in her life had Mrs. Stokes actually begged for anything of any one, and her pride rebelled against doing it. But there was no help for it; the child was starving.

She crossed the narrow hall, and tapped at the opposite door. A rather blank look was bestowed upon her by her landlady when she obeyed the summons to enter.

"I thought 'twere my son's lass," was the short intimation. "Pray what may you be wanting, Mrs. Stokes?"

"To find myself back, safe hidden in my own room," was Sarah's innermost feeling, standing there in her new abasement as a beggar for the first time. But she had given that child a promise, and it should be redeemed this time.

"I've come to beg a bit o' bread—just a crust or anything for the little un. He's so hungry, and I've nowt to give un."

The whole of the two sentences was blurted out in one breath, and the first response they met was a startled—

"What?"

As a fact the ejaculation had nothing whatever to do in the way of an answer to the modest petition. It was only a sign of Mrs. Medlar's astonishment at the humbleness and soberness of the loud-voiced, brazen-faced, drinking, insolent lodger, who had been the sharpest of thorns in the flesh for her for the past fourteen months. But Sarah read the sharp word by the light of her own expectations, and with head drooping yet more wearily, she said—

"Ye don't believe me? All the same, I'm speakin' Bible truth now. An' if ye like I'll send the child in here, and ye can give it to un yourself, and see him eat it, too. He won't take long to do that, I'll be bound."

"And what have you got for yourself?" asked the other woman, looking at her attentively, as she got up from her own tea-table and went to her larder.

Sarah Stokes shook her head half impatiently at this further question. "Nothing, of course. If I had, should I come begging to you for the child? But it don't matter for me. Why should it? I can bide well enough till the mornin', but little uns can't."

There was a moment's pause; then she added, heavily, "And for that matter I can die, and I'd quite as lief, if I weren't afeard. But I'd rather as the little un didn't. I've growed to love him like my own, and I've tramped since eight this morning to try and earn him a bit to eat."

"Why have you gone on drinking so, then, all this time?" came yet another question, although a new look of intelligence came into the querist's face the while, and she only muttered a grave "Humph," when her companion retorted, with the curtness of misery—

"Drinkin', indeed! That's all ye knows on it. Bread's been hard enough to come by, and the money to pay ye, with none to spare for drink. But give a dog a bad name."

"I'll give you something better for once in a way this evening, poor thing," was the pitying quiet answer; "and I'm sorry I've been so hard to you in the past. The dear Lord only knows what would become of us if He were as hard to us as we are to each other."

Five minutes later Charlie was rejoicing over a basin of hot bread and milk, given as the best thing for him in his faint state; and as he sat in Mrs. Stokes's lap eating, she also ate with thankfulness the good supper given her.

The next morning she dressed the little one as carefully and neatly as means allowed, and after a hearty breakfast, supplied by the same hand that bestowed the supper, Sarah Stokes set forth with Charlie to make restitution.

Sometimes the little fellow walked; sometimes she carried him; and many a long rest they took on their ten mile way.

Not so much that Sarah Stokes was tired with the walk or the child's weight, as that her heart was weighed even to the dust with sorrow, and fear, and shame.

More than once she was tempted to turn back, but she loved the child now, and for her love's sake, if for nothing else, she must give him back his birthright—a birthright which she supposed was one of a good deal of worldly comfort, too, nowadays. She was more perplexed than ever at the tale the vicar's wife had told, when, on asking at last for Mrs. Yates's shop, she learned that the false cousin had turned her and her children out of house and home instantly after Sandy's death, and the widow had ever since been eking out a small railway pension with plain sewing.

"But I heard she'd been doin' no end o' things for other folks the past six months," said Sarah, in amaze.

"Aye, to be sure; and so our neighbour, Widow Yates, has, and her daughter Molly, too, and her biggest son. But 'tain't money as they gives, but time and thought, and cleverness and kindness, and—and—and everything as folkses wants almost, to make life a bit easier. Even to them as has done them harm they're good and pitying."

"Even to them as has done them harm they're good and pitying," repeated Sarah Stokes that night as she knelt with her face bowed into Mary Yates's lap.

"Send me to prison! O, Mary! Mary! send me to prison. I shall be really glad now to be made to suffer. Send me to prison."

"I will hope to take you to Christ instead," was the low, sweet answer of the rejoicing mother, our neighbour, Widow Yates. THE END.

GIRLS.

BY SARAH TYTLER.

The Choice of an Occupation.

WHEN a lad is completing his boyhood, the most serious consideration that meets him is the choice of an occupation, be it trade or profession, which is to be his chosen field of activity and usefulness in the future which lies before him. Ought it not to be so, in a measure, with the mass of girls? In a measure only, because a woman's calling is not independent, like a man's; she was formed to be his helpmeet, and home is her kingdom. Whether she marry or remain single, domestic claims, which she is called on to fulfil in their sacredness and sweetness, must always hold a large place in her life, and take much out of it. But with this reservation it would be well if girls, as well as boys, were summoned at the turning-point in their history, which leaves them women and not girls, to discover what occupation they have most taste and talent for, to follow it lovingly and faithfully; and if, like some of the boys, some of the girls err in their first selection, to hasten with clearer, calmer judgment to fix on another pursuit, for which they find themselves after all more suited, and to abide by it.

There are few things to be more regretted in the early lives of many girls, who have not been forced by necessity to fill one calling or another, than the idleness and aimlessness in which golden hours have been spent—a time when youth is in its first flush of radiant hope and unspent vigour—which no regret for misspent moments, no later earnestness of purpose, will recall. So well known and fully acknowledged is the certain deterioration of mind and heart occasioned by a protracted period of pleasure-seeking, trifling, absolute vacancy—say between a girl's twentieth and her twenty-sixth years, after she has quite left school behind her, and before she has formed new ties with new duties and obligations—that moralists and philanthropists have strongly urged various remedies for the sickening of a vague disease, the frittering away of intellect and affections on objects unworthy of the sacrifice, and, finally, the mischievous excursions after novelty and excitement, which are apt to be the refuge of empty hearts and brains.

Early marriages have been warmly recommended as an antidote, not very logically and wisely; for the girl who has not chalked out a path for her feet, and an employment for her head and hands, is not likely to be a very good wife and mother. As a means of education in itself, marriage may be said to cultivate the heart, but it does not necessarily develop and train the mind, and a small-minded wife and mother is not to be specially desired.

The large field of the poor and needy, loudly calling for recruits of every kind to fill the army that is to fight its battles, is another opening authoritatively advocated for young women in general, without more sense and consideration—however much goodness of heart may lie at the root of the argument—than is to be found in the suggestion of early marriages. Human experience and sympathy born of experience, coolness, calmness, endless patience—the very attributes least allied as a rule to hot-headed, restless youth—are absolutely requisite, as well as generous impulses and kindly inclinations, in those men and women who make the working of the field of the poor and needy not a temporary occupation, not a passing amusement, not the following of a fashion, but the deliberate aim and end of their lives, unless the workers are reckless—whether they are to confer benefits or injuries, whether they are to bless or to curse.

Every good girl, with the Christian fibre of magnanimity and tenderness in her nature, will wish to help the wretched, will do what she can all her life through—often at much cost to herself—to alleviate suffering, lessen ignorance, and impart peace and gladness; but to make the poor her field of work she ought to have, and to know that she has, as decided a "vocation" as the conscientious Roman Catholic asks equally from the girl who becomes a sister of charity and the girl who becomes a cloistered nun.

In one sense those women are not the least happy who are born what used to be called "working women," with a decided inference that the workers were bread-winners, and that the work was largely of a manual character. The daughters of mechanics, small tradesmen, small farmers, etc., know, as a matter of course, that, by the time they approach womanhood, if not before, they must do something for themselves, and, let us hope, for their neighbours. They must be domestic servants of some sort—cooks or nurses, dairy or laundry maids, dressmakers, machinists, shop-girls, factory-

girls, and so on. A girl of individuality of character and decision of temper will have a voice in the post she takes; a girl of no mind of her own, and with a weak will, generally drifts into the situation which is provided for her.

It goes without saying that, unless in exceptional cases, where self-denial and the relinquishment of natural promptings are imperatively demanded and (if yielded in an honest and gentle spirit) are blessed in another way, the girl who has the enterprise and perseverance to struggle to attain the place in life she feels she is best fitted to fill, has far more chances of happiness and success than her companion who has allowed herself to be carried along and set down by accident and the greater determination of others. But whatever the career may be—it does not signify very much what it is, supposing it to be honest and reasonably healthy and remunerative; it does not even matter so very greatly whether it is self-chosen or imposed upon the girl—the really vital thing is that it should be taken up cheerfully and heartily, and followed courageously and steadfastly. A girl may have as much pride and pleasure—and oh! the lightening of drudgery when pride and pleasure come into the work—in ironing shirts as in making cheeses, in dusting a room* as in weaving lace. Let us hope many of us know how tasks, at first distasteful, may, after lengthened and careful performance, become positively attractive and welcome. The one precious gift or attainment is to learn not to look on lawful work of any kind as a penance or a personal injury, but as God's most beneficent boon to man and woman—the very crown of their manhood and womanhood; something to cherish and make the most of; the feature in human life which unites men and women of all classes and grades to Him who said, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work."

A LADY UNDERGRADUATE OF LONDON UNIVERSITY.

The most signal disgrace, after active vice (and, indeed, it is passive vice of the most enervating and corrupting kind), is for a princess or a pauper to lead an idle life.

For girls of a higher rank there were, within the recollection of the writer, few openings for enterprise. All that has changed. Not only are there many more pursuits at the command of such girls, enlarged opportunities for cultivating their talents, freedom to do what was once denied, honours to be won, credit (even an approach to fame and fortune) brought within reach; a great thing for all is that many associations which were thought beneath the dignity of gentlewomen are now, one may say, raised to the dignity of the fine arts. All women cannot be great thinkers, great writers, painters, musicians, scholars, physicians, etc.; without the natural endowment it is foolish to try, just as it was a serious misfortune half a century ago for every gentlewoman who was left destitute to be condemned to be a teacher of some sort, whatever her disqualifications, in order to earn a livelihood. But we have grown a little wiser since then, or rather we have gone back a whole century to the wisdom of our ancestors, when gentlewomen were "mantua-makers," and milliners, sold tea, or lace, and became housekeepers and even waiting-maids to "ladies of quality," without abating a jot of their gentility. Schools for cookery, schools for needlework, trade firms (the principals of which are ladies), have altered the prospects of women to an immense extent within a single generation; surely, when the circle is ever widening around her, no girl, of whatever degree, can fail to find some occupation for which she has a genuine taste and capacity. As in the case of her more humbly born sister, the question is not so much what occupation she fixes upon, as how sincerely and honourably she carries it out. In the days of her youth, though she works, there is no need for her to be without rest or recreation, and it is only after labour that rest is sweet, while it is the best workers who are almost invariably the best players.

* "Who sweeps a room as for Thy laws
Makes that and the action fine."
—*George Herbert.*

The Stolen Children.

By Sarah Doudney

They carried the children far away
From the land where they were born,
And brought them straight to the palace gate
In the light of an autumn morn;
The queen came out in her robe of red,
With pearls upon her breast;
"The way is long from their home," she said,
"Now hasten, and give them rest."

The pillows were wrought with threads of gold,
The couch was carven fair;
There were silken folds to keep the cold
From the little slumberers there;
"We do not want them," the children cried,
"We want our cabin small;
And mother's kiss that we never miss,
And the sunbeams on the wall!"

Then they brought them toys all set with gems,
Baubles of baby kings,
Quaint images crowned with diadems,
And birds with emerald wings;
"We do not want them," the children wailed,
"Such playthings are not good;
But our balls of moss we loved to toss,
And the pine-cones in the wood."

Then the dark-eyed queen said,
"Come to me,
For my heart is lone this day;
The gods have taken my babies three,
And my youth has withered away!"
"We do not love you," the children sighed,
"Your face is strange and white;
But we want to rest on mother's breast;
Oh, carry us home to-night!"

They carried the children back again
To the land of woods and rills;
The queen looked after the stately train
As it wound across the hills;
"They were not meant to be mine," she said—
Her eyes were strained and wild—
"For some must hunger, and some be fed
With the love of a little child."

FOOD—ITS INFLUENCE ON HEALTH.

BY M. SHIEL,

Lecturer to the National Health and Ladies' Sanitary Societies.

"Live not to eat, but eat to live."

TELL me what you eat and I will tell you what you are." Such was the startling statement once made by one who was setting forth the importance of considering carefully the subject of food; and, though we may be unable to adopt the idea unreservedly, we shall not be far wrong in admitting that there is more reason in the statement than may at first appear. It was a Frenchman who gave utterance to this remark, and his nationality may, to some extent, account for this view of the close connection between what we *eat* and what we *are;* for, as a nation, the French devote much more time and thought to the question of food than we on this side of the Channel; and there is little doubt but that it would be better for us were we to take a lesson from our neighbours in this respect.

As a nation, we certainly err on the side of taking too little thought for what we eat and drink—not recognising the fact that food, though the great means of preserving health and life, is quite capable of being the means of producing disease and death. How few of us think seriously of the appalling number of children who begin the journey of life weighted with the burden of life-long disease, only because in infancy their food was utterly unfit either to support or to build up the body; and how little we realise that numberless diseases developed in after life may be traced either directly or indirectly to food, to mistakes as to its quality and quantity; leaving out of the question the more direct results which too frequently point to food as the unmistakable cause of some fatality.

If we have thought at all of these things we shall be ready to admit that though we should not "live to eat," we should certainly devote both time and attention to considering how we may best "eat to live," assured that both the one and the other will be amply repaid by better health in our households, and (what is very important but frequently overlooked) better temper also. To be amiable when suffering from dyspepsia is, of course, possible to some few people, but this is a condition not often attained, and not to be expected; and, therefore, were there no other reason than the harmony of the household to be considered, it should be sufficient to induce those on whom depends the happiness of that household to study the very close connection between good health and good temper, and the very important part which good food plays in preserving both. We should learn to regard the irritability arising from dyspepsia as but one of the outward signs of an evil which gradually but certainly tells upon the whole being, destroying vitality while it diminishes happiness.

This being the case, it becomes the duty of every woman in charge of a household to know something of the properties of food; something of the purposes which it serves in the body; and, above all things, something of the principles which should regulate the preparation of food, with the one great object of making it most easily digested, and most ready to perform the work of nutrition. To secure that the food of the household shall be such as will tend to promote health and happiness requires a little knowledge, some experience, and a good deal of forethought; and very often, where the two former qualifications exist, the lack of the last spoils all. How often it happens that in the home of the artisan the question of dinner receives no attention until it is time to begin its preparation. Then there is a rush to the butcher's and another to the greengrocer's, and money hardly earned is wasted in the purchase of chops or steaks—anything that can be cooked rapidly—while more economical pieces are left behind, only because, to be valuable as food, they should be stewed, and no time is now left for that slow process.

Herein lies much of the difference between the wife of a French artisan and an Englishwoman of the same rank in life. The former could most probably tell you on any day of what the next day's dinner shall consist, for her *pot-au-feu* stands always near the fire, ready to receive all scraps of meat or bread or vegetables; and by the time it is required for use there is ready the material for a dinner as cheap as it is good, consisting for the most part of what we waste, and forming at the same time a very near approach to a perfect food.

While travelling through a remote part of Normandy I once had the opportunity of seeing the results of the economy and forethought which distinguish the French housewife. It was evening, and the children of the village inn had just gathered in goodly number round the table, on which the mother soon placed large plates full of soup, together with a correspondingly large piece of bread for each. The children's evident enjoyment of the meal tempted me to make a trial of the soup, which proved to be excellent, consisting of various vegetables, thickened with crusts of bread, and, as the mother triumphantly informed me, without a single scrap of meat in its composition, dripping having served the purpose, imparting not only the necessary flavour, but also the lacking element of fat in the food. As I looked at the rosy and smiling faces of those Norman children, I wished that the mothers of little boys and girls at home could only be persuaded that such a supper as that—so cheap and so nutritious—should be substituted for the bread and tea on which many a child here grows up feeble and nervous, and utterly unfit to fight the battle of life in a world where the victory is to the strong.

But in order to arrive at a just estimate of the importance of food, it is necessary to consider the great purposes which it serves in the body and the inevitable results of an insufficient or an unsuitable supply.

In the first place, food *builds up the growing body,* supplying the material for fresh bone and muscle, brain and nerve. It is for this reason that the question of food is so all-important, while growth still continues; for whether the structure is to be firm and strong, or feeble and tottering, must very largely depend on the food supplied to the growing frame. Whence come the larger bones, the increased brain and nerve power, and the more fully developed muscles of the man as compared with those of the child? From food. Whence, on the other hand, come the deformed limbs and the enlarged and powerless joints of the numberless little sufferers from "rickets" who may any day be seen in the crowded parts of our large cities? Chiefly from unsuitable food in infancy. And whence come the delicate frames and pale faces of many a school-girl (and,

for that matter, of many a school-boy too), but from a want of such food, and in such quantity, as rapid growth makes absolutely necessary, if the building process is to end in a firm structure.

And secondly, food *repairs the continual waste* going on in the body. We cannot move the smallest bone without using up some of the muscular tissue which works it; we cannot perform a single action or think a single thought without waste of some of the material of which the body is composed. And since this waste is constant, it follows that the repair must be constant also; for just as a fire needs a continual and suitable supply of fuel to keep it brightly burning, so the fire of life must be continually sustained, or like the actual fire, it will slowly die out for want of fuel. Too much fuel, on the other hand, will extinguish the fire; and life may be rendered less vigorous and death more near by too large a supply of food, especially when the vigour of manhood is past. The fuel supplied to the fire must be such as can become part of the fire itself; and similarly our food must be such as can readily and easily become part of the body, or, in other words, such as can be readily assimilated.

Thirdly, food sustains the *warmth* of the body, and at the same time supplies the *force*, which is spent in work of every kind. It is for this reason that, when left without food for some time, the body loses its natural warmth, and no amount of external applications can restore that warmth. It must come from within—from that process of burning which goes on whenever fresh material is supplied to the blood, and without which both heat and force must rapidly diminish; for these two are very closely connected—so closely that when warmth begins to fail through lack of food, we must not expect that the force necessary for work can be maintained.

Seeing then that vigour and strength, that health and life, depend upon our food supply, shall we not readily grant its importance, and granting this, act as though we believed what we profess?

HOW TO FEED A FAMILY.—X.

DINNER.—Mulligatawny soup; Irish stew; fried tarts.

This soup is much enjoyed by those who like the flavour of curry-powder, and, as it makes a nice variety, it is well to give the recipe. Carrot soup (made in the same way as artichoke soup, only substituting the same weight of carrots for the artichokes) may be made at the same cost, if preferred.

Mulligatawny Soup.

Materials.—Stock, 3 pints; onions, 3; milk, 1 teacupful; flour, 2 tablespoonfuls; salt and curry-powder, 1 saltspoonful each; rice, 2 tablespoonfuls; 1 lemon.

How to make it.—Slice the onions, stew them in the stock for two hours; then mix the flour, curry-powder, and salt, evenly with the milk, add this to the soup, boil for ten minutes, stirring often, and serve with dry rice, and a lemon cut in quarters. Time, 2¼ hours.

Dry Boiled Rice.

Wash the rice in warm water, and throw it into a saucepan of boiling water. Keep it boiling for eight or ten minutes; then turn the rice into a drainer on a plate in the oven. Shake it every five minutes till dry, which will be in about twenty minutes. It is impossible to give a certain rule for boiling rice, because the different varieties and sizes need different treatment. The best way to make sure of the *exact* time your rice will take to boil and dry is to try a small quantity, and note how long it needs to cook. Few English cooks can boil rice well; it is worth a little trouble to get over the difficulties; and when once you have made sure how many minutes the rice you buy must have (both to boil, and to become thoroughly dry), then keep to the same sort of rice, and you will have no trouble. If it be over-boiled it becomes wet and mashy; if not done enough, hard. To be well done, every grain should be swelled to its full size, yet dry, and separate from the rest. Time, half an hour.

Irish Stew.

Materials.—1 lb. breast of mutton; 2 lbs. of potatoes; 3 onions; 2 tablespoonfuls of flour; 1 teaspoonful salt; ½ teaspoonful pepper; 1½ pints water.

How to make it.—Cut the meat into small pieces. Slice the potatoes and onions raw. Mix the flour, pepper, and salt; dip each bit of meat into it. Put a layer of sliced potatoes at the bottom of the pan, then a layer of meat, then one of onion, and so on till the dish is full, covering with a layer of potatoes. Pour the water over the whole, and stew for two hours, slowly. (Stock may be used instead of water, but it is not necessary.)

This dish may be made in a saucepan or a pie-dish, when, of course, it is cooked in the oven. The secret of success is to cook it slowly, and on no account to let it *boil*. Meat contains *albumen*, which is like the white of an egg. This, we all know, turns into a tough, leathery substance when boiled; and, in the same way, meat becomes tough and hard. For this reason we put a joint of meat into boiling water for five minutes *only* (which has the effect of forming a hard case to keep the juices in) and then simmer it slowly. In *stewing* we wish to have a good gravy, and, therefore, cook it slowly the whole time, when the meat will be tender and digestible, and the gravy rich. Time, two and a half hours.

Fried Tarts.

Materials.—6 stale farthing cakes; milk, 1 teacupful; jam, 4 ozs.; dripping, 2 ozs.

How to make them.—Cut each cake in half, the thin way; warm the milk, and pour it over the cakes. Make the dripping hot in a frying-pan; fry them a light brown; spread each with jam before serving. Bread, neatly cut, or stale roll, can be used instead of these cakes, if desirable. It is useful to know a few nice dishes which can quickly be added to a dinner, if needed; this takes only ten minutes to make, and is generally liked. Time, ten minutes.

Expenses.

Mulligatawny soup.—Onions, 1d.; milk, ½d.; flour and rice, ½d.; curry-powder, etc., ½d.; lemon, 1d.; total, 3½d.

Irish stew.—Mutton, 7½d.; potatoes, 2d.; onions, 1d.; flour, etc., ½d. Total, 11d.

Fried tarts.—Farthing cakes, 1½d.; milk ½d; jam, 2d.; fat, 1d. Total, 5d.

Total Cost.

Mulligatawny soup, 3½d.; Irish stew, 11d.; fried tarts, 5d.; bread and vegetables, 4½d. Total, 2s.

To dine six persons; average, fourpence per head.

I. L. Richmond.

THE DEPARTED SUMMER.

BY A CHILD TWELVE YEARS OLD.

Long ago the summer left us;
  And the flowers have gone away·
Ever colder grows the season,
  Ever shorter grows the day;
Bare and leafless are the forests,
  Autumn's days are almost done,
Growing shorter with each journey
  Of the pale November sun.

Now no more I see the swallows,
  In their swift aerial flight,
Circle round and round the house-top,
  At the coming on of night.
When the wind wails through the forest,
  It will seem to sigh and weep;
'Twill be mourning for the flowers,
  Fallen now in their long sleep.

Now no more I see the fireflies,
  They have gone away too soon;
No such help as theirs is given
  To the waning hunter's moon.
But the stars shine down as brightly,
  With the same unchanging light,
As they shone down on our planet
  In the mildest summer night.

No more, in the early morning,
  Sing the robin and the wren;
I must wait until the spring-time,
  For the thrush to come again.
No more, in the starlit evening,
  Sings the plaintive whip-poor-will;
No more builds the friendly blue-bird
  On the lonely window-sill.

Sadly now descend the rain-drops
  On the dead leaves 'neath my feet;
For they miss the fragrant flowers
  They in summer used to meet.
Sooner ends the day in darkness,
  And the world is cold and drear;
Earth mourns the departed summer,
  In the autumn of the year.

But I thought, ere long the summer
  Will return with gentle breath;
And the rose will bloom as sweetly
  As it did before its death.
It will be as fair and fragrant,
  As it was ere it lay low,
'Neath the overspreading mantle
  Of the chilling winter snow.

'Twill be so in years a-coming,
  As it has been years ago.

"BEAUTIFUL GARMENTS"; OR, MARJORIE'S MISTRESS.

BY LINA ORMAN COOPER,

Author of "We Wives," etc., etc.

II.

Mrs. Carroll was dressing to go out for a dinner party.

It was very seldom such a thing happened. Indeed, though Marjorie and her mistress had lived together for three years, it was the first time the former had helped to dress her mistress for any entertainment. She looked on wonderingly, as Bertha arrayed herself in cream satin—relic of the happy wedding-day so many years ago—and arranged the sparkling embroidery across her bosom. She sighed as Bertha fastened on the gold bracelets and pinned up her hair with a glittering butterfly. Then she smiled as Bertha picked up her fan and floated downstairs to bid adieu to the little ones. Never before had Marjorie seen her mistress in anything but calico or serge, the yellow and brown stuff she wore in summer, or the thick blue woollen that had done such good service the last two winters. So the little handmaiden looked on the transformation scene with wonder. If only her mistress could always be dressed in silks and satins!

"Take care of the chicks, Marjorie. The master has the latchkey, so you need not wait up. Good night, all of you."

A happy smile was on the girl's lips as she turned back to tidy up the room Mrs. Carroll had left in some confusion. Those three years of service had not been "with rigour," as any one can see. They had been years of mutual give and take between mistress and maid. Yet as Marjorie folded up bits of lace and put away the things her mistress required so seldom, she contrasted the rough grey winsey she wore with the shining satin her mistress had gone out in. For the first time Marjorie has had a glimpse of the beautiful, and she was ready to fall down and worship it.

She did not do this, however. She only hurried the little ones to bed a little quicker than usual, cut short their sleepy confidences, and betook herself to her own room rather earlier than her wont.

Then she gathered up all her thick brown hair on the top of her head, and pinned it there. She tied a bit of ribbon round her throat, arranged a piece of muslin over her arms, and next——looked at herself with admiration? No, with some contempt.

She could *never* be like her mistress.

In the days that followed, Mrs. Carroll noticed a change in her little handmaiden. The bosom of her frock was often ornamented by a blue bow; the crumpled collar now always replaced by a perfectly smooth one, and even in time gave place to a frilling tacked in carefully. Marjorie's apron was of coarse stuff still, but it gradually came to be edged with thread lace, and Margery's wrists were now always cuffed with daggling linen.

Mrs. Carroll marvelled, but only suggested to the girl that she must not spend all her money in finery.

Marjorie's brow flushed. Was her little attempt at self-beautification *really* only a love for "finery" after all? Surely not. It was a deeply-rooted instinct lying at the bottom of every woman's heart—the desire for prettiness and pretty things.

Miss Benson still lived at the little house, with its white steps, just round the corner. Bertha Carroll was still in the habit of carrying to the old lady every puzzle and anxiety in her daily life.

So once more she took her advice as to Marjorie's new development.

"She thinks so much more of dress than she used to do, Miss Benson. She takes quite half-an-hour in the morning to dress herself, and is careful to have every hair in its right place."

Miss Benson—the very essence of nicety and exactness in her own person, attired as usual in her Quaker gown of dove colour, with clean muslin cap and kerchief—smiled a little.

"Dost thou find fault with her for that, friend Bertha?" she queried. "Surely neatness is a desirable thing in thy handmaiden."

"I do not want to let her get into the habit of thinking of her dress too much," pleads the visitor. "She used to be content with her plain winsey on weekdays and better serge for Sundays. I am afraid of her getting conceited."

"What age was thy maiden then?" inquired Miss Benson. "Three years is enough to alter a young girl's ideas muchly, friend Bertha."

"She is eighteen now. She was fifteen when she came first to me," replied Mrs. Carroll, after some quick mental calculation.

"Just the age to have her head turned, unless thou dost act the part of counsellor," decided the old lady. "Think over it thyself, friend Bertha, and the Lord will lead thee right."

So Marjorie's mistress went her way homewards, left to find out for herself how best to meet her maid-servant's requirements.

She had not much cause to complain of Marjorie during

the days that followed. Only a few odd moments were wasted in front of the looking-glass; only a little unwillingness was shown to soil or roughen her hands with extra work; only a fresh and rather gaudy ribbon was put on the Sunday bonnet. But at last one morning Marjorie appeared with a little row of curls across her forehead.

Mrs. Carroll had let all the former indications go on without speaking, but she had to remark, and a little severely, on the new embellishment. Only before she called her handmaiden to task, Bertha spent some time on her knees, with her open Bible in her hand. If all mistresses would do the same, how different would be their admonitions!

Marjorie was slightly defiant and injured. Surely there was nothing wrong in trying to look "nice." She so loved pretty things!

"People differ as to what *is* '*nice*,' Marjorie," said her mistress; "and *I* do not wish my servant to wear a fringe."

It was said quietly enough, but Marjorie bounced away. When she returned, it was without the curls (they had been smoothed back easily with an application of cold water), but with a moody and tear-smirched face.

* * * * * * *

In reply to a little note from Miss Benson, Mrs. Carroll went to her house that same afternoon. The old lady received her with a bright smile.

"It always does me good to see thee, child," she said, cordially. "Take off thy bonnet and let us have a talk over thy little handmaiden. I saw her to-day with a most unseemly frown upon her brow."

When Marjorie's mistress had unfolded her budget of difficulties, Miss Benson paused awhile. Then she said slowly—

"I have been thinking over the love of finery and beauty, friend Bertha Carroll. The former I think we must condemn most justly. The latter is God-given."

"How are we to decide between the two?" inquired the visitor, leaning her chin on the palm of her hand, and looking intently into the glowing fire.

"Each heart does that for itself, friend. But take my Bible and read therein as I bid thee."

Very willingly Bertha obeyed. These Scripture talks were sweet to her, coming, as they did, in the midst of household worries and cares.

"The love of beauty in dress is God-given," went on Miss Benson. "He cultivates it even. Look what the prophet Ezekial saith about it."

Bertha turned to the sixteenth chapter, and read slowly—

"I clothed thee with broidered work, and shod thee with badger's skin, and I girded thee about with fine linen, and I covered thee with silk. I decked thee also with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon thy hands, and a chain on thy neck. And I put a jewel on thy forehead, and a beautiful crown upon thy head. Thy raiment was of fine linen, and silk, and broidered work . . . . . and thou wast exceeding beautiful . . . . . and thy renown went forth for thy beauty, for it was perfect through my comeliness, which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord God."

"That is very true, Miss Benson," said Marjorie's mistress, after she had pondered over the verses a little wonderingly. "But that does not tell us to array *ourselves* in fine clothes. It is God who robes us, and surely we can take these verses only in a *spiritual* sense. Surely the ornaments and the silk mean the 'garments of salvation,' 'the robe of righteousness,' and such like?" (Isaiah lxi. 10).

"I think not, friend Bertha, for God saith to Job, 'Deck now *thyself*, . . . and array *thyself* with glory and beauty," (Job xl. 10).

It was a new text to Marjorie's mistress. Miss Benson continued—

"More than that, the Lord Himself wishes us to look beautiful. 'So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty' (Psalm xlv. 11). Canst thou blame thy little handmaiden, friend Bertha Carroll, for wishing to fulfil that desire?"

It was altogether a new way of putting it, and her listener could only acknowledge how ignorant she was of God's word and of God's ways. Who would have thought that Marjorie had so good a case?

"This has been a new search for me as well as for thee, child," said Miss Benson, after a little more chat. "Our Society of Friends has taken St. Paul's words literally, and so we are dressed without ornament (1 Tim. ii. 9). We have been right, I think. Still there is much on the other side. Be not too hard upon thy handmaiden, friend Bertha Carroll, but strive to lead her right."

When Mrs. Carroll got home that same afternoon, she pondered over her conversation with Miss Benson for a long time. Then she turned to the Book that is to be our guide by the wayside, in the house, on our beds, and everywhere. What more had it to say upon this knotty point of dress?

This is what Marjorie's mistress learnt. She found that Jacob gave his son Joseph a "coat of many colours" as a mark of affection and favour. She read of God's own command to the colour-loving, beauty-craving Israelites: "Speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them that they make them fringes in the borders of their garments throughout their generations, and that they put upon the fringe a ribband of blue" (Num. xv. 38). She learnt the deep lesson imbedded in the white, and scarlet, and gold, and blue robes of the priest in Exod. xxviii. She pondered over the "holy garments for glory and for beauty," with their trimmings of bells and pomegranates on hem and border. She was taught carefulness about earthly covering when she read that Aaron's clothes were to descend to his sons (Exod. xxix. 29). She found that the recommendation of a housemistress, in olden days, was that "She clothed all her household in double garments" and made for herself coverings of tapestry, of silk, and of purple (Prov. xxxi. 21). Yet she was warned by Achan's example (Josh. vii. 21), not to think too much even of "goodly" raiment.

* * * * * * *

When next Marjorie's mistress bought her little servant a new gown it was, though plainly and simply made, of a pretty blue colour, very becoming to the young girl's pink and white complexion. Marjorie received it with some surprise. It was so different to the sober gray and brown winseys she had grown so weary of. With it in her hand she could listen respectfully and gratefully to Mrs. Carroll as she spoke to her gravely. Very patiently her mistress went over the texts mentioned above, and then spoke to Marjorie about the natural love of beauty all women possess. Something very like tears were rolling down the round cheeks before Mrs. Carroll finished.

"So you see, Marjorie, there is nothing wrong in liking to be well and prettily dressed. The wrong comes when we let it take up too much of our thoughts and time, or when we dress beyond our station in life. Only let us be careful that 'The beauty of the Lord our God be upon us' (Psalm xc. 17), and that we live daily 'in the beauty of holiness'" (Psalm xxix. 2).

THE FIRST HOME.

(Genesis ii. 8-17; iii. 1-8.)

BY MRS. G. E. MORTON.

WE have known this strange, sad story all our lives. We have listened to it at our mother's knee in early childhood; as we grew older we have read it for ourselves over and over again; many of us have told it in turn to our own little ones; and yet it has never lost, and never can lose, its deep and melancholy interest. We have here our first sight of Paradise; but how brief a glimpse! Just as our eager hearts are thinking to obtain a nearer clearer view, the scene is changed; Paradise is blotted out—lost—and sin in all its terrible deformity and miserable consequences takes its place.

Has it ever struck you how much of tender care and loving thought is implied in this description of Eden? If you were expecting a guest to come and stay with you, the preparation you would make would much depend upon the estimation in which you held the expected visitor. If it were someone for whom you had neither affection nor regard, you probably would not take more trouble than was absolutely necessary. But if it happened to be a dear friend who was coming, it would be a delight to do all you possibly could to make everything bright, and pleasant, and comfortable.

In just such a way, it seems to me, God prepared a home for our first parents.

The whole earth was beautiful and perfect. Everything was "very good," fresh from the great Creator's hands, unmarred by sin, untouched by evil. Yet one spot must be made doubly sweet and beautiful; for there the Lord God would place the man that He had formed. So He "*planted a garden*," and made to grow therein "every tree that was pleasant to the sight and good for food"; and all this wealth of loveliness and delight was given over to Adam and his wife. Of all the varied fruits so lavishly provided they might freely eat—of all save one. Even the Tree of Life was not denied them. It was only the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil which they were forbidden to taste.

Truly the test of obedience could scarcely have been more easy or more simple. It exacted no self-denial from them; it could cause neither hardship nor suffering; yet they fell. The forbidden fruit was plucked and eaten, and Paradise was Paradise no longer. *How could it be?* The very meaning of the word is "a place of bliss"; and could *any* place be heaven in which there was a consciousness of guilt, and a dread of the consequences? (Isaiah lvii. 20, 21; Heb. x. 2.)

This story is full of warning and instruction. We see first of all how one wrong step may have far-reaching results beyond all that could have been imagined, and how it may bring untold misery, not only upon our own heads, but on those of many others whom we little thought to injure.

In the second place, we learn from the Serpent's wily words and their deadly effect, the tremendous power for good or for evil that lies in the tongue; and it is a very solemn thought that we are all employing this power—this mighty influence—every day of our lives. *How* do we use it? How *should* we use it? God's Word gives us very plain directions on this point, "Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt," or wisdom (Col. iv. 6). But as we cannot speak on subjects of which we know nothing, it will be requisite for us to get our hearts and minds stored with the needed knowledge. Here again the Bible gives us the necessary clue: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom" (Col. iii. 16). If Christ's word thus dwelt in us, what blessings we should be in our homes! What *light-bearers* we should be! "holding forth the word of life" (Phil. ii. 16), and making others love it because they would see its transforming influence on our own lives and tempers.

In the third place, this story shows us that if there is responsibility in *speaking*, so also is there in *hearing*. Do you remember our blessed Lord's warning on this subject (Mark iv. 24): "Take heed *what* ye hear"? Widely different might have been the history of the world if Eve had turned a deaf ear to Satan's daring words and guileful temptation. Widely different also would have been the history of many a wrecked and wasted life in our own day, if there had been the determination to refuse to listen to the voice of the tempter, or to hold any communication with him. For Satan assumes many forms and disguises (2 Cor. xi. 14), and he employs many servants to carry out his will. With malignant skill he adapts his temptations to the various characters and dispositions, circumstances and weaknesses, of those whom he would ensnare; for six thousand years of diligent practice in deceiving unwary souls have made him dangerously expert.

With Eve his object was to shake her faith in God's word; so he came to her with the insidious question, "Yea, *hath* God said?" boldly followed by the emphatic contradiction of his Maker's words, "Ye shall *not* surely die."

And he acts in the self-same way now. To those who are hovering on the brink of evil—longing to pluck some forbidden fruit, to taste some sinful pleasure—he says, "Yea, *hath* God said, 'the soul that sinneth it shall die'? Ye shall *not* surely die. You can repent on your death-bed, and go to heaven after all!" To those who are bearing the burden and heat of the day, and are often weary and depressed in body and mind, he says, "Yea, *doth* God care? He cannot care for you, or He would make all things smooth." If thus the Tempter comes to you, believe him not—refuse to listen to him. He was a liar and a murderer from the beginning (John viii. 44), and his one aim is to destroy your peace, to work you woe, and to lose your soul. God is on your side, and His word is true: "Resist the Devil, and he will flee from you" (James iv. 7).

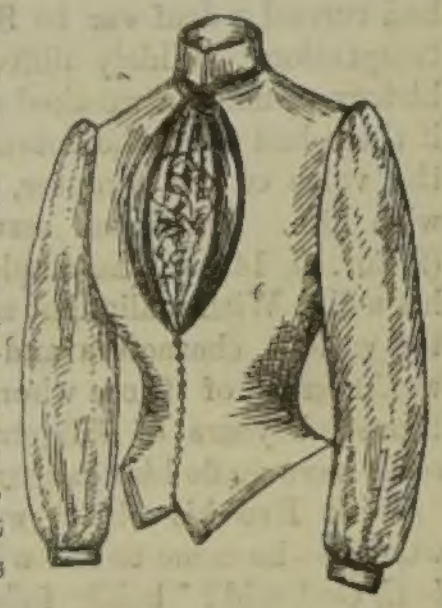
We have seen how, through Satan's wiles, the first and most perfect home ever formed upon this earth was broken up through sin. Can you not picture to yourself the mournful scene as, hand in hand, our first parents left that paradise that had been prepared for them with such loving care by *their* Heavenly Father and *ours?* Can you not realise something of the bitterness of their grief as they passed along the flowery paths of that garden of surpassing loveliness, and reflected that through their own folly and disobedience their feet must never tread those paths again?

But Almighty Love, who in compassion gave the promise before He pronounced the curse, had set before them the hope of future blessedness to keep them from despair. And the same Almighty Love has set before *us* that bright hope of everlasting life, and of a home "eternal in the heavens" (2 Cor. v. 1), to cheer our hearts when compassed with difficulties!—that blessed home where sin and Satan cannot enter, and which can never be broken up.

DRESS AND DRESSMAKING.

If there is one month in the year much more disagreeable than another, it is November, with its yellow fogs and shortening days. When December comes we know that the turning-point is at hand, and that daylight will speedily come earlier and stay later, and that is always something to look forward to. But the damp days (in which prudence bids us stay indoors if possible) and the long evenings are favourable opportunities for needlework, and if we employ them diligently we are free to do other things in more inviting weather.

Fashion does not present us yet with any striking alterations. Polonaises are fast coming back into favour, and very becoming they are both to slight and stout figures. Jacket bodices are also very much worn, and though many are severely plain the majority have a small imitation vest in the front, either made of a different material or of the same used in a different way; as for instance, if the dress is made of stripes that run lengthway, they can be reversed and used horizontally for the vest. Coat sleeves are no longer exclusively worn, but the best dressmakers are making small bishop sleeves, not very full at the shoulder, and set into a band at the wrist with a box pleat, which looks smarter than gathering. A specimen of this may be seen in our first illustration. This kind of sleeve is admissible in silk, cashmere, or any other soft material, but is not suitable for cloth, velveteen, or serge; and it only looks well when there is a full vest, however small, in the front of the bodice.

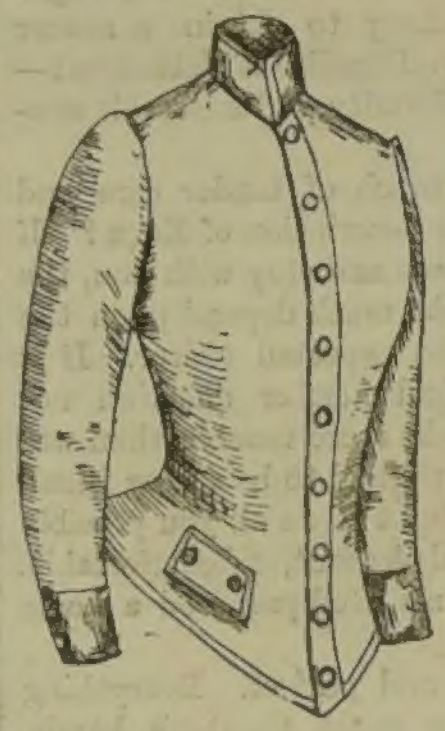


Linen collars and cuffs will never be quite out of fashion, but they do not suit every one, and besides, dressing is a much shorter operation when the dress is quite ready to put on. Crossway folds of soft cream silk, tacked into the neck and sleeves, are much worn just now, and will wash a time or two; and for occasions when a little smartness is desirable, loops of narrow ribbon make a very pretty tucker. Narrow satin *bébé* ribbon is the best, and the bows should all be the same length, and sewn on a foundation of silk or soft muslin before being put into the dress. A long piece of the same ribbon run through the loops and tied in a bow after the dress is fastened keeps them in their place, or if this is not liked the loops can be put over a crossway fold of silk or muslin, which makes a more substantial tucker.

Small bows of white gauze ribbon, one at the neck and one on each sleeve, have been much worn lately; they have very much the effect of a gentleman's evening tie, and if not particularly charming make a little change and variety.

Our old friend, velveteen, will be as much worn as ever this winter, though with a difference. The newest thing of the kind is called velvetina, and has very much the same effect, though the pile is if anything closer, and the patentees say that it will wear better. The great thing for comfort, in a dress of this kind of material, is to have it lined with silk. It may be old or dyed, that makes no difference at all; and perhaps it is the most satisfactory and economical use to which an old light silk can be put. Velveteen has a terrible trick of clinging and dragging, and this treatment quite obviates that defect.

Quite plain close-fitting long light-brown coats are being very much worn. They completely cover up the dress, and are made with such high collars that most people can wear them without a handkerchief round the neck. They neither show dust nor mud spots, and look well either with a brown hat or bonnet, or one of a contrasting colour. Small cloth jackets are much liked, and the plain one of which we give a sketch is almost a facsimile of one recently sent out by a first-rate ladies' tailor. Neatness is the great characteristic of all the best houses.



Gloves are worn much shorter, and that is of course because sleeves are longer. With full sleeves set into a wristband, the neatest and most comfortable way is to put the glove on completely, and then fasten the wristband over it. This will be found to keep jersey gloves admirably in their places.

Skirts are longer than they used to be, and also very much fuller. This allows them to be gathered closely all the way round, a fashion which regulates the fullness better than the pleats. One row is not enough, and three rows of gathers are better than two. Four rows make the top of the skirt very nice and even, and have the effect of flatness under the basque of the bodice.

For trimming winter dresses and jackets in which two colours are combined, very pretty woollen braids are being made in the most popular mixtures, such as two browns, black and white, or a light and a dark grey. Three rows of this down the side of a skirt simulate a panel, or a row laid on the edge of a jacket allows the cloth to be turned up on the right side under it, which is one of the neatest finishes imaginable to an unlined garment.

Patterns of the bodice and jacket shewn above can be had by enclosing 6½d. in stamps to M.L., at the office of the MOTHERS' COMPANION. *They will be dispatched as promptly as possible, but cannot be sent by return of post.*

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